

**Tuesday, December 11th, 2012**  
**Small Business Owners of Downtown Hamilton**  
**Re: Possible Downtown OLG Casino Proposal**

**To the members of the Gaming Facility Proposal Subcommittee,**

We are writing this correspondence as taxpaying local businesses who have invested our money to make downtown an increasingly vibrant central business district, and to express our concern and opposition to the placement of any new OLG gaming facility in Hamilton's downtown.

We were surprised to hear the claim of Mayor Bob Bratina at the November 30th meeting of the Gaming Facility Proposal Subcommittee that "I think I know every restaurant owner in downtown Hamilton.... they all insist we have to have a Casino downtown." We would respectfully suggest that this claim is inaccurate- there exists a split of opinion among local businesses, including restaurants.

As downtown business owners, we believe the impacts of a Casino would be neutral at best and possibly negative. Many people have acknowledged that while challenges remain, our downtown has turned a corner, helped significantly by the contributions and investments of many small businesses.

It has not been shown that a Casino will have a broad positive impact for the pre-existing businesses in the downtown core, nor will it advance our goal of attracting a vibrant mix of new businesses to the downtown. We would point to Brantford's example; while revenues of a Casino, when prudently applied, are helpful in the context of any cash-strapped municipality, in terms of direct economic spinoff to the businesses that surround a Casino, there is virtually none. The demolition of 41 vacant buildings in 2010 on Colbourne Street, directly across the road from the OLG Brantford Casino, would seem to confirm that.

We have tried several strategies in our attempts to rethink our downtown core over the past few decades. We know that bringing tourists in for a few hours is not nearly as reliable as bringing in more residents who will live, work and play in our downtown core for a few years or decades. The day-to-day sustainability of the downtown small business community is largely reliant on achieving that goal, a goal that is directly at odds with the placement of a new OLG facility in the core.

We know by trial and error that self-sustaining developments with little positive interaction with the businesses surrounding it is the wrong approach. We also know that our city has a number of existing social challenges to overcome, and a gaming facility will only do more to exacerbate those challenges, in a way that can never be completely quantified or mitigated.

We feel our local Councillor has heard clearly from the residents he represents that the downtown community does not support a Casino. We felt it was also important to highlight that there are many local businesses who stand firm with those residents in opposing the Casino. We urge council to respect the wishes of both businesses and residents on this issue.

Signed,

**Small Business Owners of Downtown Hamilton**